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Historicity of Ezra

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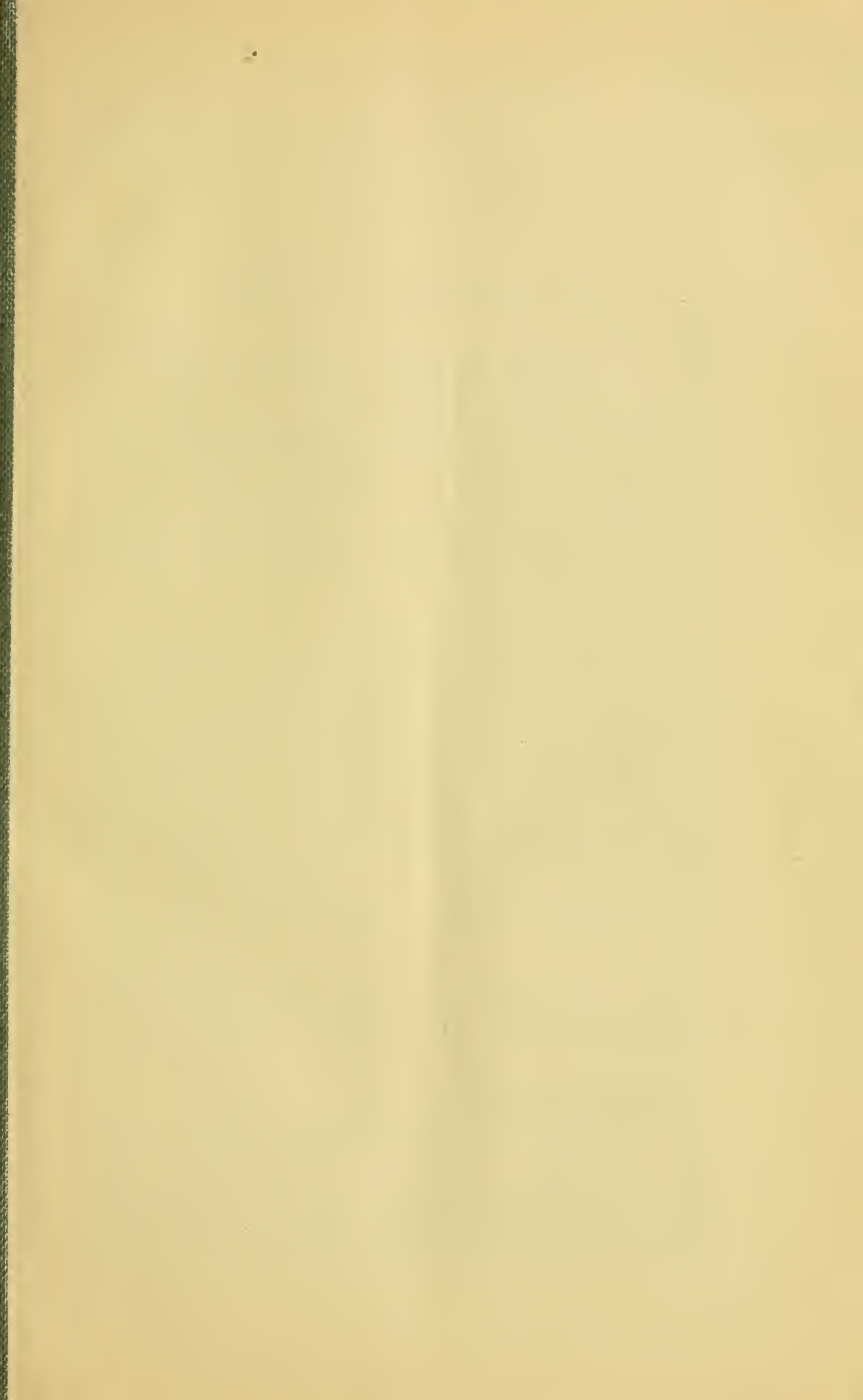
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THE HISTORICITY OF EZRA.

HAVING completed (in a former article*) the examination of the principal documents of Ezra, there remains the vindication or rejection of the historical narrative in which they are imbedded. The verdict must depend largely on the testimony furnished by those documents, for it has now been established that they are entitled to all credence. The order in which the material will be discussed is the natural order suggested by the literary analysis of the book: *A.* Historicity of the Aramaic narrative (6). *B.* Historicity of the Hebrew narrative: I. Of the first half of the book (7); II. Of the second half of the book (8).

A. HISTORICITY OF THE ARAMAIC NARRATIVE-SECTIONS.

Although iv. 6, 7, are in Hebrew, they have been assigned to the Aramaic source; in it they formed, together with ver. 8, a series of introductions to official documents, of which only the last has been preserved. These verses require special notice at this point, not because their credibility is questioned but because some have held that they require emendation before their historicity shall be accepted. The most ingenious proposal that has been offered as a restoration of the original text is that of Meyer. He reduces the three accusations of the Samaritans to two; in this he is not alone, for a number of critics had already made emendations along this line.† But the original suggestion due to him alone is that in ver. 7*b* we should read: "and the letter was written in *Persian* and translated into Aramaic," the first ארמית being an error for פרסית. He would have us believe, therefore, that this correspondence under Artaxerxes, and indeed all the official documents in chaps. iv-vi, were composed originally in

* Printed in this REVIEW for July.

† This reduction of the number of the accusations to two is based upon the assumption that the later writer preserved scrupulously all the material in these verses, only confusing it in the arrangement. But this is an assumption contrary to what we know of his manner of handling his sources; and the omissions, now of the subject, now of the object, upon which Meyer bases his whole argument, may be much better explained as due to intentional abbreviation, in view of the new context that rendered the repetitions of subject and object unnecessary.

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Persian, and that beside this was placed a rendering into Aramaic, in accordance with the linguistic custom of that time and place.

This is a most interesting suggestion, and it deserves a careful examination of the reasons adduced by Meyer in support of his proposed emendation. These reasons are as follows :

1. The word כְּתָרָנִים (ver. 7*b*, rendered "set forth" in the Revised Version) means "translated," and as the letter is said to be translated into Aramaic, its original *must* have been in some other language. What other language could this have been, save that of the Persian officials who composed it ?

2. The interpretation usually placed upon the first member of this double statement concerning the language—viz., that the *script* employed was the Aramaic script—is meaningless and "absurd." On the contrary, the word כְּתָב is only a marginal gloss upon the obsolete Persian word הַנִּשְׁתּוֹן, from which position it has crept into the text ; it does not refer to the characters of the document, but to the document itself, precisely like הַנִּשְׁתּוֹן.

An impartial examination of these arguments fails to confirm the deduction that Meyer would draw from them. For, in the first place, the rare and obscure word כְּתָרָנִים cannot be proved to have only that signification which Meyer ascribes to it. As far as may be judged from its root, its meaning may be quite as broad as that suggested by the English rendering "set forth." It may be used in order to express what we know to have been true of this letter—that while the men interested in its composition were of various nationalities and hence of various tongues, nevertheless in this communication they united on the Aramaic common to them all as a *lingua franca* : it was "set forth" in the Aramaic. All the evidence presented in Meyer's own book concerning the linguistic usage in Western Asia at that time would lead us to expect that such an accusation as this would be written not in Persian but in Aramaic.

Furthermore, there is no ground for the objection which he raises against the usual interpretation of this double statement. In Esther i. 22, iii. 12, viii. 9, we have most instructive parallels of the usage that must have been most common at a time when the forms of the older characters were undergoing marked changes. Thus in the passage last cited we have not only the double statement of "writing" and "language" (which occurs also in the other two passages cited), but we have also the repetition of the same phenomenon twice over in the same sentence, since the author adds, "and to the Jews according to their writing, and according to their language." These parallels are the more instructive because the very word used for the "writing" in these

cases is כתב, of which Meyer says that it is "absurd" to refer it to the script employed. This serves at the same time to overthrow the assumption that כתב was a gloss on הַנְּשִׂתוּ. The two words do not, as Meyer asserts, "exactly correspond;" for the latter denotes the letter itself, while the former, as in Esther, denotes the characters in which it was written. This does not indeed exhaust the meaning of כתב; for by its broader signification it is extended in the second member of the clause to embrace the whole thought of "the document"—unless the construction here be regarded *ad sensum*, as it may well be.

Apart from the expressions used in the text, however, there is ample reason for disputing the assertion that a reference here to the script is "absurd." What we know of palæographic conditions at that time and place is just this: the older forms of the so-called "Hebrew" alphabet were undergoing the changes that finally rounded them off into the cursive "Aramæan" script used in the western satrapies of the Persian empire. On the other hand, there was in use among the Jews, at least down to the time of Nehemiah, a script that much more nearly resembled the older characters of the Moabite stone—technically known as "closed," in distinction from the "open" forms of the Aramæan development.* In such a situation, that a Jewish writer should note the script in which an Aramaic document emanating from a mixed population in Samaria was written, is so far from "absurd" that it seems perfectly natural, and only what would be expected if he mentioned the language at all.

It deserves remark, before leaving this subject, that this view of Meyer's regarding the bi-lingual form of the originals of the official documents is entirely independent of the question of their authenticity. The citation of Persian words and phrases proves the date of their composition and the source from which they sprang, but it has nothing to do with the purely speculative question of a Persian original alongside of the Aramaic form preserved, which was also in as real a sense the "original" form.

As for the other two sections embraced under this general heading of Aramaic narrative-sections, it is clear that in general their historicity has been vindicated when the documents have been proved genuine. This follows from the character of the Aramaic source, as already determined; it is a documentary history, and the limited portions which serve to introduce or to give the sequel to the material contained in the documents are themselves little else than the same subject-matter in another form.† Thus iv.

* See Stade, *Hebr. Gramm.* p. 26; Taylor, art. *Alphabet*, in *Hastings' Dict.*, esp. p. 74.

† Cf. article *Comp. of Ezra*, in this REVIEW for April, 1900, pp. 266-274.

24-v. 5 is the introduction to the correspondence under Darius, and largely derives even its phraseology therefrom; and vi. 13-18 in the main relates only the actual accomplishment of Darius' commands as given in his rescript. A number of critics refer vi. 14b, 16-18, to the same later hand that added the succeeding verses in Hebrew (19-22).^{*} And Meyer adds v. 1f. to this element which "the Chronicler" is held to have contributed to the original Aramaic core of these verses. But apart from the admitted difficulty of explaining the arbitrary use, now of Aramaic, now of Hebrew, by the same writer in the same narrative with no assignable reason for changing where he does change, there is the further observation to be made at this point, that the silent assumption in all this procedure is that the verses so sundered out and given to "the Chronicler" are *thereby* discredited. When the undisputed contributions of the later writer have been examined as to their trustworthiness, then and not till then can judgment be passed upon this inference from the authorship of these disputed verses to their credibility. On purely literary grounds this partition has not commended itself; but if that conclusion were not valid, still it would be sufficient to remark that in that case the general verdict upon the trustworthiness of the later writer, to be rendered hereafter, might be justly extended to cover this work from the same pen. The remarks about to be made immediately below, concerning vi. 19-22, would then be in force for these verses also which just precede them.

B. HISTORICITY OF THE HEBREW NARRATIVE-SECTIONS.

I. *Of the first half of Ezra.*

The sections included in this division are chap. i, iii. 1-iv. 5, vi. 19-22. The last of these contains the account of the first Passover after the completion of the temple. Its historicity is of such minor importance, in comparison with that of the great events narrated in chaps. i and iii, that no critic, it may safely be asserted, will question its truth to fact, if he has already yielded the point of the same author's credibility in the earlier narratives. And in general it is to be observed that there is no way in which the historicity of a small and unessential passage like vi. 19-22 can be *proved*, beyond the two very general considerations of the author's credibility and the inherent probability of the event narrated. But in the other two sections, we reach the two chief questions which have agitated the critical discussion of Ezra

^{*} The only specification usually given is the mention of Artaxerxes in ver. 14. But this is an anachronism with a purpose anyway, and it may be referred quite as well to the earlier as to the later hand.

since 1867 and 1893 respectively. At the former date, Schrader issued his well-known inquiry into the duration of the building of the second temple; and at the latter date, Kusters investigated with much minuteness the testimony for a return under Cyrus. Both of these writers reached conclusions in direct contradiction to the testimony of the Hebrew narrative of the Book of Ezra—Schrader to that of chap. iii, Kusters to that of chap. i.

This is the point, therefore, at which it becomes necessary to examine these critical works. And in connection with this examination of Kusters and Schrader, opportunity will be taken to introduce any positive arguments, independent of their writings, which may appear pertinent to the general question of the trustworthiness of the Hebrew text; and this in such a manner that in the end, if these critics appear justified in their positions, the chapters under discussion shall be considered discredited; but, on the other hand, if these critics' conclusions appear unsound, then the narrative of Ezra shall be retained as historical. These two questions will now be asked, and an answer to them attempted: first, Was there a return under Cyrus? and second, Were the foundations of the temple laid under Cyrus?

First.—Was there a return under Cyrus?

Kusters devotes the first chapter of his book to the examination of those sources which had previously been supposed to establish beyond question the fact that the builders of the temple were returned exiles. After reviewing and passing judgment upon the question when the building of the temple was begun—in which he agrees with Schrader—he passes immediately to the testimony of the three witnesses, other than the author of Ezra, to the fact of a return under Cyrus. These witnesses are: (1), the books of the prophets Haggai and Zechariah (i–viii); (2), Ezra v and vi; and (3), the document in Neh. vii (Ezra ii). From an examination of these witnesses he undertakes to establish the general position that not one of them (in their original form) knows anything of a return in the sixth century.

His argument is therefore to be rated thus in general: First, if successful, it is at best the precarious *argumentum e silentio*. Second, it is an essential part of his plea to establish firmly the antecedent probability of an explicit mention of the fact alleged to have been left unmentioned. Third, he must be successful in every argument that he advances; he must prove each separate point conclusively; for if one single attempt fails, then his whole argument from silence of course falls to the ground. Fourth, whatever cumulative power there may be in a well-wrought series of arguments, this cannot be claimed by Kusters for his position,

since his points are for the most part isolated attacks. On the contrary, even if in each case he succeeds in making his point, this presumption is always against him: that a position which requires such varied and unusual means to establish in each particular point is probably not the correct position when both views are compared *as a whole*. It is undoubtedly due more to such considerations as these than to any other cause that Koster's attempt has been generally rejected by the critical world.* Nevertheless it is necessary to review his arguments in detail before a final opinion can justly be pronounced upon them.

(1) The testimony of Haggai and Zechariah.

The first thing in these books to which Koster calls attention is the use of certain terms and titles for the people to whom they spoke. He mentions "the people" or "this people," "the rest (or remnant) of the people" or "of this people," "the people of the land," and "Judah" or "house of Judah."

But there is no force in these considerations; for such expressions as "this people" do not furnish any indication whatever as to the character of those addressed. In fact, we find the same phrases used constantly of the community after Ezra's return. "The people of the land" is not the same phrase as "the peoples of the land" or "of the lands," to which he compares the phrase; the latter is always עַמֵּי הָאֲרָצוֹת or עַמֵּי הָאָרֶץ (once גוֹי ה' Ezra vi. 21). But even if it were the same, it would prove too much for Koster, for it is impossible to identify the audience of Haggai and Zechariah, whatever it may have been, with the class indicated by the plural phrase (cf. Neh. ix. 30, x. 32, compared with xiii. 16). As to the name "Judah," it has already been seen† that Zechariah addresses this people as "Israel," as well as by the term "Judah," in a passage (viii. 13) above any reasonable suspicion; and according to the very principles which Koster himself has laid down, this is sufficient to demonstrate a previous return. The interpretation which the Leyden professor puts upon the expression שְׂאֵרִית, a "rest" or "remnant," and other forms from the root שָׂאֵר, is quite indefensible. For in the first place, in half of the passages where it occurs, viz., those in Haggai, it means simply "the rest," in the sense of "the others besides." And in the other three passages where it is found, the discourse of the prophet is so ideal that it is impossible to affirm of any one of them that it contemplates the Palestinian community *apart* from

* Those who followed Koster are: Wildeboer, in *Th. St.*, '94, pp. 277ff; Matthes, in *De Gids*, '94, Dec.; Marti, in *Litter. Centralbl.*, '94, No. 37; a reviewer in *Dev. Litt.-Zeit.*, '94, No. 38; Zeydner, in *Museum*, '95; Cheyne, *Introd. to Isaiah*, '97.

† Cf. *Doc. of Ezra*, in this REVIEW for July, p. 434.

any exiles returned or yet to return.* In the second place, Kusters will probably be alone in "thinking involuntarily" of a "remaining over," not only in time but also on the same geographical spot, when Haggai asks, "Who is left (נִשְׁאַר) among you that saw this house in its former glory?" And in the third place, both Ezra and the prophets (among the latter Jeremiah, to whom Kusters especially appeals) use the word to designate exiles, either returned or not yet returned (cf. Ezra ix. 15, Isa. vii. 3, x. 21, Mic. ii. 12, Jer. xxiii. 3, etc.).

Kusters' second argument is drawn from the circumstances of the community to which these prophets addressed their discourses. They were altogether a settled population, with cultivated fields, vineyards, olive-yards, fruit-trees, etc. "They are addressed as men settled in the land for many years."

But this circumstance does not, in fact, plead for one view rather than the other. If there was a return in 538, it would not be surprising to find the population showing signs of "being settled for many years" when Haggai spoke in 520, still less at the date when Zechariah uttered chap. viii of his prophecy, in 518. Wellhausen and others have professed to discover in Haggai i. 9 evidence that the community was just engaged in building its private houses: "Because of mine house that lieth waste, while ye run every man to his own house." Van Hoonacker also defends this position, though in a modified sense. He says: "It is not the private interests in general, but the houses, in a material sense, that form the subject of the anxiety with which the prophet finds fault." But in view of the context it appears that this is not the true interpretation. The private dwelling is undoubtedly contrasted with the house of God, but the "running to the house" may refer simply to zeal in such private matters as "bringing home" the harvests alluded to in the first part of the same verse. In any case, the mention of house-building eighteen years after the arrival of the builders would seem out of place;† and it would furnish no proof of a general return on the large scale of Ezra i and ii.

The third general phenomenon of these books to which Kusters directs attention is their attitude toward the exile and the return therefrom. He asserts that for Haggai and Zechariah the "*straf-tijd*," the period of chastisement, still continued, and that the return long promised and expected was regarded as yet in the

* Thus in the very midst of the verses where it occurs (Zech. viii. 6, 11, 12) we have a prophecy of a return (ver. 7).

† Cf. article by Eerdmans, "The Historical Background of Zech. i-viii," in *Theol. Tijds.*, '95, especially p. 187.

future. From these assertions as premises he draws the conclusion that therefore there had been no return, and that the population of Judah and Jerusalem in 520 was composed of the descendants of those left in the land when the exile began.

Now the question of the standpoint of a prophetic writer is always, from the very nature of his utterances, a delicate problem, to be examined with great care and judged by a broad standard of interpretation. This is, of course, doubly true in the case of the visions of Zechariah, whose local and temporal standpoint cannot be pronounced upon in any hasty or inconsiderate fashion. The position which Kusters takes in regard to Zech. i-vi has called forth two replies, both of which start out with the judgment that Kusters is entirely wrong in his fundamental conception of the passage. One of these, that embodied in Van Hoonacker's reply to Kusters, takes the ground that the scenes portrayed by Zechariah are a reproduction of the course of history between the years 540 and 520, whose events unfold themselves in ideal perspective before the prophet's vision. The beginning of Cyrus' reign is thus his *ideal* starting-point. The other writer referred to is Eerdmans, who goes one step further and, rejecting the dates prefixed to the discourses of Zechariah, places the prophet not ideally, but *actually* at the same date, 540. Kusters is right in the opinion that he has since expressed* regarding these attempts, that they are unsuccessful. Van Hoonacker's position cannot stand before a sound exegesis of the chapters and, besides this, is altogether too artificial to find adherents. And Eerdmans' position is lacking in evidence to support it, and raises more difficulties than it professes to solve. At the same time, these views serve to *emphasize* the fact that the interpretation of these chapters is marked by wide differences of opinion, and is not to be settled in a cavalier fashion.

Of course it is impossible to present here a complete statement of the prophet's standpoint and outlook in Zech. i-vi. But the following general remarks on Zechariah's attitude toward the exile and the return will, it is believed, be found justified by a careful exegesis of the chapters in question. (1) When the "period of chastisement" is referred to as still existing (*e.g.*, i. 12-17), the very pith and point of the popular complaint and of the prophet's answer lie in the fact that it is still continuing *in spite of* the fact that already there lay back of them that external event, the return under Cyrus, which was generally supposed to usher in the new period of "comfort" and "mercy." But in this supposition men were mistaken. The external and national event of the

* In *Theol. Tijds.*, '37, pp. 52ff.

return was only one side, and that the lesser side, of the restoration to ancient privilege. It was not until the house of God, long neglected because of the moral and religious indifference of the returned Israel, was at length rebuilt as a visible sign and pledge of the resumption of the ancient religious status, that the "period of chastisement" for Israel was ended. And to this *inward* and religious *consummation* of the Restoration, on the side most overlooked in all the history of Israel, Zechariah was still looking forward when, in the second year of Darius, he could cry "how long?" (2) Whatever the number of those who actually returned in the sixth century—whether a few wanderers, as Kosters would probably allow, a few thousands, as Wellhausen holds, or from fifty to two hundred thousand, according to the various interpretations of Ezra ii—in any case their proportion to the whole number of the exiles was certainly disappointingly small. There were many thousands of Jews whom mercenary or other considerations constrained to remain in Babylon, in the "land of Shinar," the land of the curse and the home of wickedness (Zech. v. 11). Now there was no provision in the economy of Jewish religion or politics till long after this period for a Diaspora. The nation of Israel, the chosen people of God, were assigned the land of Palestine as their home; and a Jew outside of this land was in himself an anomaly, an exception unprovided for. Whenever, therefore, the hopes of the devout Jew reached out to the glorious future promised from of old to Israel, yet undefined as to the time of its realization, he found it one of the chief elements of his expectations that Israel in that day should be *one*, that all the "sons" should be brought "from afar" and all the "daughters from the ends of the earth," to unite in the glorious worship of the central sanctuary of Jerusalem. What then is more natural than for Zechariah to cry to those yet in Babylon, "Ho, ho, flee from the land of the north," "Ho, Zion, escape, thou that dwellest with the daughter of Babylon?"* He, too, looked for the perfection of the people by their reunification, that they might meet their God in His restored sanctuary.

It appears, then, that it is both hasty and unjust to argue that because the "period of chastisement" still lasts for Zechariah, and because he exhorts a return to Zion, therefore there has been

* The terms "flee," "escape," may be used to express the *haste* required by the prophet, without any idea of secrecy or illegality. But apart from this, the hostile attitude of Cambyses and Pseudo-Smerdis toward such an exodus will be universally recognized; and Darius had not been on the throne long enough at this time to let his policy on such matters be known beyond a doubt. Moreover, the early part of his reign was occupied with the suppression of revolts in the eastern provinces.

no return and not even a first step toward the conclusion of the time of Israel's exile.

How then does the question now stand? What is the testimony of the two prophets regarding a return? In the first place, there is nothing in their books inconsistent with a return. In the second place, according to the laws that Kusters has laid down for us, the use of the term "Israel" by Zechariah proves a previous return. And in the third place, the ministry of the prophets is better explained, and rendered more pointed, if there has been a return whose outcome was a disappointing anti-climax both externally and morally. Can we go further and find any more positive indications in these short books that such an event had happened? For valuable arguments of this nature we are indebted to the reply* of Wellhausen to Kusters, which the latter has attempted to answer,† but which, it appears, cannot be answered on his theory of sixth century Jewish history.

The first observation of Wellhausen on the testimony of these prophets is the weakness of the *argumentum e silentio*, even if that argument could be established in this case. Kusters labors hard to prove that they ought to have referred to the return if there had been one, that it would have pointed their lessons so admirably, etc. But in view of the two general remarks made above on the attitude of the prophets toward that return, it is impossible to agree that their discourses would have been one whit improved in rhetoric or in effectiveness by the insertion of the thoughts which Kusters suggests as improvements.‡ There is thus a humorous side to the Leyden professor's answer to Wellhausen; and this is tenfold more noticeable when, two years later, he comes to criticise Meyer's estimate of this same argument from the prophets' silence. "As if," he writes, "as if here my chief argument had been removed by a mere touch! As if what has so surprised me were nothing more than what Meyer can explain so absurdly easily!"§

But Wellhausen calls attention to more than the weakness of his opponent's position. He also urges, second, that Zerubbabel and Jeshua were undoubtedly the respective heads of the Davidic and the high-priestly families, and therefore must have been returned exiles. Kusters attempts to explain the high positions to which these leaders were assigned by Haggai and Zechariah from their activity in the temple-building. But Wellhausen's

* *Rückkehr der Juden.*

† In *Theol. Tijds.*, '95, pp. 549-575.

‡ Surely the more familiar a thing is to both speaker and hearers, the less likely it is to be referred to. One is reminded of the famous Napoleonic *arg. e sil.*

§ *Theol. Tijds.*, '97, p. 520.

pertinent question still remains unanswered: *how* can they have regarded one not descended from David as called to such high dignity? Moreover, Haggai's word was "unto the governor" and "to the high-priest" already on the first day of the *sixth* month, *before* they had begun to "do work in the house of their God." What will be said of Zerubbabel at a later point will confirm this position.

Finally, Wellhausen calls attention to the lack of spirit in the people, from which the prophet Haggai labors so earnestly to rescue them. How is this to be explained, save on the supposition of disappointed hopes, raised high by *some previous event*, but dashed by the misfortunes and neglect of the succeeding years? Nor is this argument met by Kusters, simply by pointing to the fact that Hag. ii. 1-9 dates from a month later than i. 15—that is, that encouragement was needed in view of the disappointment arising from the temple's insignificance. For even in i. 1-11, Haggai's words are already filled with exhortations manifestly suggested by the same heartless, unenterprising spirit of the people. "Ye have sown much, and bring in little" (i. 6), is but a true figure of the blasted hopes and withered courage of a disheartened community.

(2) The testimony of Ezra v and vi.

As already seen, Kusters assigns these chapters to two sources, *A* and *B*, which at a much later time have been combined into one account, as we now have it. *A* attributes the building of the temple to the favor and aid of Darius; *B* projects the same event into the earlier period of Cyrus' reign, and makes that king the temple's patron. But neither document, according to Kusters, relates or presupposes the return of a train of exiles from Babylon. That representation was left to the imagination of a still later age. It has been shown that this partition of the passage between two sources is impossible,* and that the official documents which it contains are genuine and historical. The use of these chapters is therefore limited, for the present purpose, to witnessing for or against a return under Cyrus. It will be agreed by all that there is no positive evidence here against such return. The case therefore stands thus: Does the passage bear witness to a return, or does it not? If it does, the historicity of that event is established; if it does not, there is an argument from silence against its occurrence. On this subject, then, attention is drawn to the following points:

These chapters are concerned with the building of the temple—its legality, its history, its leaders, its vindication. Any men-

* See *Comp. of Ezra*, in this REVIEW for April, pp. 268-270.

tion of the fact of a return would be incidental and subsidiary. Such mention then, if such there be, will be found, not in a formal statement, but in the manner of an allusion or hint. For no one will deny that if there had been a large return under Cyrus, it would be so well known even under Darius, that for the circumstance to be expressly stated either by or to those who had themselves returned would be an unnatural proceeding, *unless* there were some particular reason for referring to it. Such a reason, Kusters thinks, exists in v. 12f. After the Jews have told Tattenai that Nebuchadnezzar "destroyed the house and carried the people away into Babylon," why do they not add to the statement that Cyrus decreed to rebuild the house the declaration that he restored the people? Yet on examination this proves to be simply a case of *ça va sans dire*. For the very term used in v. 12, "the people," emphatic and unrestricted,* would make it senseless to add that Cyrus sent "the people" back. Were not *they* "the people" who were talking with Tattenai, and did they not stand before him on Palestinian soil? Nor can Kusters weaken the force of this argument by asserting that only a few of the nation were really carried into captivity, and that those who remained in Palestine were "the people" in a very real sense. For apart from the general arguments against this limited view of the exile (which will be considered in another connection), it is only necessary to point to this very passage, v. 12, to prove that the carrying away into captivity by Nebuchadnezzar could be called a deportation of "the people." Thus the place which Kusters has himself selected as a test for his argument proves fatal to it.†

There is little advantage to be gained in an argument with Kusters over this question. For as soon as he was convinced that our chapters did contain allusion to a return, he would immediately remind us that the account after all is a composite of two late documents; and that the part in which we find such allusion belongs to the later document, which is quite unhistorical and untrustworthy. In fact, the only merit that any of these documents possesses for Kusters is the negative and meagre merit of lacking each the traditional corruptions and accretions of the next later one, and thus affording opportunity for a purely speculative construction of the course of the "Cyrus-tradition." But with Wellhausen it is different. He rejects the chapters and their documents as unhistorical mainly on the ground that they agree with the representations of "the Chronicler." In his argument for

* Read עִבְרָה (for עִבְרָא) with the best texts, not עִבְרָה as in most editions.

† And this result has not been reached by looking at the question "through the spectacles of chap. i," of which Kusters so often complains.

the fact of the return, therefore, he fails to use these chapters as a witness to it, not because they do not suppose it, but because their testimony is worthless. In fact, Kusters and his immediate adherents are the only critics who cannot or will not see here a witness to the return under Cyrus. It is proper, therefore, to add to the former argument this substantiating fact, that the general critical judgment on these verses (including critics of every possible shade of prepossession) sees in them the same allusion to the return as has just been set forth.

Again, it is inconceivable, on the one hand, that a monarch who showed himself so favorable to the Jewish hopes and ideals as Cyrus is represented to us in these documents, should have refused to allow the exiles who wished to return to do so; and on the other hand, that the nation, seeing this successor of its oppressors favoring in an astonishing degree its own highest wishes, should allow to escape this opportunity of procuring at last from a well-disposed prince the coveted privilege of return to the home-land. Should the mere vessels of metal be sent back, and the living captives restrained? And should the sanctuary be restored, and the nation remain scattered? The elements for a return under Cyrus are these, and only these: first, a desire to return; and second, a favorable prince. Who will deny that both elements were present to a marked degree in 538? And what more was required? Meyer's excellent remarks on this situation deserve to be quoted: "Cyrus simply reverses the brutal measures which the Chaldeans had been compelled to adopt; to undo the damage which the Chaldean domination had brought to the subject peoples was of course the natural rôle of Persian policy. This policy had not the slightest interest in holding the deported Jews in Babylon; so Cyrus gives permission to them to return, and commands that they build up again the temple of the God of Jerusalem, whom the Jews had represented to the Persians as a God of heaven, or, more correctly, as a 'God of heaven and earth' (cf. v. 11)."*

Finally, of whatever nationality Sheshbazzar may have been—and this question must be reserved for discussion in another connection—it is inconceivable that he should have come all *alone* from Babylon to Jerusalem, bringing the sacred vessels of the Jews, and going with the published intention of rebuilding their sacred temple by royal permission. Is that a credible position which maintains that no band of Jewish enthusiasts, religious or political, joined themselves to him, and went to share in the new glories of a restored nation?

From all these considerations the conclusion seems inevitable

* *Ent. d. Jud.*, p. 49.

that Ezra v and vi are not an *argumentum e silentio* for Koster's view of sixth-century Jewish history, but that on the contrary they plead unmistakably for a return of the Jews under Cyrus.

(3) The testimony of Nehemiah vii (Ezra ii).

In the later stages of the debate upon the course of postexilic history, the tendency has been away from the books of Haggai and Zechariah, whose testimony Koster regarded as the backbone of his earlier argument, toward this list, and its proper adjustment to each of the contending views. What Koster thought of it, and what is really to be thought of it, have already been presented in the examination of its integrity and significance.* There is left only the task of hearing its testimony on the specific subject in hand. What does this list have to say on the subject of a return? In the first place, it explicitly states its occurrence in ver. 6f.: † "These are the children of the province, that went up out of the captivity of those that had been carried away, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away, and that returned to Jerusalem and to Judah, every one unto his city; who came with Zerubbabel, Jeshua," etc. This is admitted by all to be explicit testimony to the return; and only the removal of ver. 7, and the misinterpretation of ver. 6 which thereby becomes possible, can suffice to help Koster's theory over this stumbling-block. But it has already been seen‡ that such a course is arbitrary and unjustifiable.§

Second, it presupposes the return under Cyrus. No use will be made of certain arguments to this effect which have been brought forward by those who uphold the same position regarding the list as that defended in this paper; such arguments are those drawn from the B'ne-Hakkos in ver. 63, from the order of registry—first laity, then priests, etc.—and from the relation of this list to the lists in Neh. iii, Neh. x and Ezra viii. For Koster has since shown that these are capable of explanation on his own theory, as well as on the traditional view.¶ But all the greater emphasis must be laid upon certain other features of the list,

* Cf. *Doc. of Ezra*, in this REVIEW for July, pp. 430 sq.

† The references are to Neh. vii, unless otherwise specified.

‡ Cf. *Doc. of Ezra*, as above.

§ The explicit statement of Nehemiah in ver. 5, "I found the book of the genealogy of them which came up at the first," is also positive testimony to the return under Cyrus; hence it also is rejected by Koster in its present form and place. He reads instead of העלים הראשונים the words הישבים הראשונים from 1 Chron. ix. 2, and transfers the sentence from its present place to the beginning of the list of the *population* in Neh. xi. As this testimony is thus challenged, and as it is beyond the limits of the present task to vindicate the integrity of Nehemiah's words, an appeal to this passage as proof is omitted.

¶ *Theol. Tijds.*, '97, pp. 536-540.

which cannot be satisfactorily explained save on the latter view. In ver. 68f. (or rather in ver. 69, since ver. 68 is disputed and is omitted by some editors) the animals mentioned are "not cattle and sheep, but camels and asses"—that is, beasts of burden for *transportation* of men and goods, not the beasts of a settled community. Wellhausen, from whom the above words are quoted, rejects the verse as a later addition, because it so flatly contradicts his theory. What could be more positive proof that it is indeed a small yet an insuperable difficulty than just this treatment of it? Kusters is less positive, but says: "In any case [*i.e.*, whether retained or rejected] this is too weak a thread on which to hang the weight of the whole chapter." Perhaps so; but why pretend in this way that there are no other difficulties for his theory in this chapter? Closely allied with this argument is that drawn from the "menservants and maidservants" of ver. 67. These seem to point to the helpers and camp-followers of a caravan, rather than to the slaves of settled life.* And in ver. 61 we find a striking confirmation of the essential nature of this list as a catalogue of those who "went up out of the captivity" of Babylon. "These are they," we read, "which went up from תל מלח, תל הרשא, etc. . . . but they could not show their fathers' houses, nor their seed, whether they were of Israel." From the names of these places whence they came, we know that they had been exiles in Babylonia. And the העלים here, taken in connection with the העלים of ver. 6, proves that the contrast is: these returned from these specified places, while the rest returned from these or other places in Babylonia not specified. Kusters grants that "at the first glance" this verse seems to favor the traditional view; but his attempt to cloud the natural contrast of the words, as just brought out, must be pronounced a failure.

Finally, there is nothing in the list which can be shown to oppose the traditional view of its significance. In another connection Kusters' three main objections have been answered. There is no more force in the remaining points which he raises in his later discussion of the subject.†

The first of these, and the one to which he devotes by far the most space, is the claim that the numbers of Neh. vii are altogether too high for a list of returning exiles. This he undertakes to prove: by the figures in Jeremiah and 2 Kings that inform us of the numbers deported by Nebuchadnezzar, by the general expressions used in these same books on the same subject, and by the representations in Ezekiel and Lamentations of the size and im-

* So Meyer.

† *Theol. Tijds.*, '97, pp. 523-532, 532.

portance of the community left in Palestine during the exile-period.

In regard to these arguments, attention is called to the following facts: (i) In 2 Kings xxiv. 14-16, xxv. 11f., Jer. xxxix. 9f., xl. 7-12, xliii. 5-7, lii. 15f., 27-30, we have presented to us a conception of the thoroughness with which Judæa was swept of its inhabitants in the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, by at least two great deportations to Babylon and a flight to Egypt—a conception quite different from that which lies at the basis of Koster's whole theory. This view of the exile indeed forms the central idea in that critic's reconstruction of the whole course of the Jewish Restoration. It is his effort everywhere to minimize its importance; yet the whole literature of the period and the whole tradition of later Judaism so magnify it, that he is constantly finding himself in great difficulty to harmonize his views with the express language, not only of tradition, but of contemporaries. One example of this inevitable contradiction will suffice. In discussing* with Wellhausen the effect of the exile on the Babylonian and on the Palestinian Jews respectively, he grants that it meant "a radical rupture of the connection with inherited traditions," and labors to show that that rupture was nearly, if not quite, as great for the latter as for the former. But the real opposition between this position and that whole representation of the exile required and openly defended by Koster, is manifest to any one who carefully studies his various utterances on the subject. The deportation was either "radical" or not radical. If the former, Koster's position is untenable, and he is willing to admit it. If the latter, it is difficult to see how the temporary captivity of their king and princes and the destruction of their temple were sufficient to produce the complete reorganization of Jewish thought and life which all parties must admit—especially in view of the fact that Koster minimizes even these misfortunes as much as possible by dwelling upon the number of leading spirits, both lay and clerical, left in the land, and by insisting that worship of a ritual nature was regularly continued at Jerusalem.† (ii) As to the passage in Jer. lii. 27-30, upon which Koster lays great stress, notice, first, that the passage is lacking in the LXX.‡ and in the parallel text of 2 Kings; second, that while its numbers have every appearance of coherence and veracity, yet we are absolutely precluded from accepting them as representing the total number of Jews trans-

* *Theol. Tijds.*, '95, pp. 535f.

† Thus he calls attention to the incident in Jer. xli. 4ff; but observe that this occurred before the flight to Egypt, as related in xliii. 5f.

‡ Except in the margin of an Egyptian MS. of the sixth century A.D.

ported by Nebuchadnezzar, because this would flatly contradict the unmistakable testimony of 2 Kings xxiv and xxv and the language of the prophets; and third, that in view of this fact many explanations have been proposed, some more and others less satisfactory, but any one of which will suffice to answer the absurd claim of Kusters that this passage *can only* mean that *all* those transported numbered but 4600.* (iii) The passage in Ezekiel (xxxiii. 23-29) pleads rather against Kusters than for him. For not only does it expressly refer to the land of Palestine as already "the waste places," but even so it relates to the period *before* the final sack of Jerusalem. This prophecy stands upon precisely the same plane as Ezek. xi. 15, 21, and proves nothing as to the condition of Judæa after the last deportation.† And as for Lamentations, the same remark is justified. Every reader of this book receives the impression of a land in the last stage of desolation and ruin. The few figures of priests and people, of which Kusters makes so much, serve rather, like a skillful artist's introduction of a few living figures amidst a scene of ruined temples, to enhance the feeling of loneliness and desolation with which the mourning stanzas of the poet inspire us.

The second argument which is supposed to plead against the traditional view of our list‡ is the fact that of the seventeen communities named in vers. 25-32 and 36-38, eleven are so situated as to make untrue either the assertion that their inhabitants really returned to them, or that the list comprises only those who were "children of the province" (*i.e.*, the Persian subprovince of Judah), both of which assertions stand side by side in ver. 6. To this it is sufficient to answer that while some of the places (but by no means eleven, for Kusters here misrepresents Meyer's language, p. 151) probably lay beyond the boundaries of the official "province," yet the language of ver. 6 is not to be pressed to such an unwarranted extreme. With their national consciousness centred at Jerusalem, and their free-will offerings of money (cf. Ezra vii. 16) and service (cf. Neh. iii. 7) for the support of its institutions, they were **בְּנֵי הַמְּדִינָה** in a very real sense. To talk of a "colossal contradiction" in these simple words is incomprehensible.

* Probably the explanation of Stade and Meyer, that it is a list of supplementary figures, is preferable to that of Van Hoonacker, that it represents the listed, important prisoners.

† Although Jerusalem had already fallen, Ezekiel expressly says that this prophecy was delivered on the night *before* "the one that had escaped out of Jerusalem" had told him "the city is smitten." Its standpoint therefore is that of one who predicts the consummation of desolation as *yet future*: "behold, it cometh," ver. 33.

‡ Oort calls special attention to this argument, in his favorable review of Kusters in *Theol. Tijds.*, '95, pp. 16f.

In ver. 39 Kusters finds the material for the third and last of his objections. It is simply this, that the phrase "the house of Jeshua" points to a time long subsequent to the date when Jeshua was living. Meyer had answered this by calling attention to the naturalness of naming a family after its chief representative during his lifetime, and not merely after his death. But Kusters has expressed himself as dissatisfied with this reasoning. He says: "One would have begun to speak of the house of Jeshua only at a time when this family had already for several generations occupied the high-priestly office." But it is not to be overlooked that this proceeds on the quite unproved assumption that Jeshua was the first high-priest of his family—an assumption contrary to the Jewish records and to every natural presumption in the matter. What seems a rational and sufficient explanation is, that the old high-priestly house received a new designation from that member of it in whom its new beginning was made after the exile. Until this view can be proved false (and not merely dismissed as unproved), all objection to the early date of Neh. vii from ver. 39 must be waived.

The arguments of Kusters have now been examined and found to be not only unfounded but also ineffective. The witnesses that he summons have proved upon cross-examination to be disastrous to his case, and have thus rendered the denial of a return of the Jews under Cyrus an untenable position. And for this very reason there has, at the same time, been vindicated the historicity of the central fact of Ezra i. Before leaving this subject altogether, however, it is necessary to ask, Is the *representation* of that fact, as Ezra i gives it, to be regarded as history or as fancy?

There are two outstanding phenomena in the first chapter of Ezra—the decree of Cyrus and the catalogue of the sacred vessels. The genuineness of the one and the reliability of the other are very generally doubted in the critical world to-day. They are "the clumsy fabrications of the Chronicler," the product of his "very fertile imagination." Are these terms justified by the facts of the case? These two questions, therefore, press for an answer: (1) Is the edict of Cyrus genuine, or a fabrication? (2) Is the catalogue of sacred vessels credible? ✓

(1) Is the edict of Cyrus genuine, or a fabrication?

At the outset, the fact is already established that Cyrus made a decree. We have the "memorandum" of a part of it preserved for us in vi. 3ff., and the genuineness of that document has been proved. It is therefore a simple task to institute a comparison of these two passages, and if it yields a favorable result, the genuineness of the one should carry with it the genuineness of the other.

Meyer, who rejects all the work of "the Chronicler," as if beneath the dignity of a critic even to discuss (the phrases quoted above are his language), uses this professed edict as a contrast to that in vi. 3 whose authenticity he is defending. His exhibition of this contrast, however, consists in simply quoting i. 2-4, and the remarks preceding and following this quotation will serve admirably to introduce this discussion of the passage. He says: "How according to Jewish conceptions the edict of Cyrus ought to sound, we learn from the invention which the Chronicler has not failed to fabricate, although the authentic document of Ezra vi stood at his disposal." "The genuine edict knows nothing of all that."*

The injustice of these remarks appears in the following points: (i) Ezra vi. 3-5 is only a fragment of the edict, namely, the part beginning with the words "Concerning the house," etc. Meyer has just said: "In Darius' letter there was scarcely communicated the complete protocol word for word, . . . but only what was of importance for the instruction of Sisines [Tattenai]; and it is expressly stated 'a roll in which was written.'" (ii) Moreover, this part of the edict (vi. 3ff.) is not exactly in its original form, for there was a considerable difference in the wording, especially in the matter of introduction and formalities, between its published form and its form as an official memorandum. (iii) The passage i. 2-4 does not profess to be the whole of the edict. This appears, first, from its unfinished condition, ending at that point where the narrative to be related would naturally unite with it; second, from the fact that the one who placed the verses here knew of the passage in chap. vi, and, even if he composed them, *must* have regarded them as supplementary to that document, and not as a substitute for it; and third, from its silence on the subject of the sacred vessels, which the same author certainly knew about, both from vi. 5 and as evidenced by i. 7f. It is not even certain that we have in i. 2 the beginning of the whole edict, according to the intention of the writer or inserter of it; it *may* be intended as a fresh start upon a new section of the edict, analagous to vii. 21. (iv) It should be remembered that this document is in Hebrew and therefore, if genuine, it has suffered translation from the Aramaic; and indeed it is a double translation from the language of its professed composer, Cyrus. (v) Finally, the purpose of the writer of chap. i should be borne in mind. He had as his circle of readers the whole Jewish nation, and along with the translation of this document there would naturally go such simple alterations in its wording as would make it, not an absolutely slavish transcript of

* *Ent. d. Jud.*, p. 49.

the original as it issued from the Persian Government, but a sufficiently faithful reproduction of the most essential part of the famous edict to which the new Jewish community owed its existence. His was no "documentary history," like the Aramaic history which served him as his source for the succeeding years. His readers had no antiquarian interest in the wording of the decree, such as the modern critic has; they had a practical interest, which fastened upon the essentials of their great "emancipation proclamation."

In view of these considerations, it is maintained that this professed edict of Cyrus is historical in its contents, that it is authentic in its general form and substance, and that of the "Jewish coloring" attributed to it, most, if not all, is due to translation into Hebrew, while the remainder, if such there be, is probably due to Jewish influence in its original composition. The proof of this position can best be brought out by a running comment upon its phrases.

"Thus saith Cyrus, king of Persia." Though this is not the customary formula at the beginning of Persian royal edicts, yet the phrase "says Darius the king," "says Xerxes the king," is of frequent occurrence in them. And though the title "king of kings" is here omitted (cf. the Behistun inscription of Darius I), yet it is to be remembered that this was among the earliest edicts of Cyrus after the capture of Babylon, and, though thoroughly conscious of the *fact* of his universal dominion, he may not yet have assumed as an official designation so proud a *title*. Darius calls himself "king of Persia."* There is therefore in these opening words nothing which may not be assigned to the original form of the edict.

"All the kingdoms of the earth hath Jehovah, the God of Heaven, given me." In this sentence no exception can be taken to the phrase "the God of Heaven," or to the idea that the Deity is acknowledged as the giver of victory and sovereignty. Both are thoroughly Persian. The breadth of the claim to universal dominion may raise some objection, but it can hardly be considered a serious difficulty in view of the habitually extravagant language of the Oriental conqueror. Even Oehus claimed to be "king of this world," and Cyrus' phrase, coming so soon after the culmination of his long campaign of conquest, well describes, as

*The suggestion is offered that where the official document of a foreign prince was not being given in its literal and untranslated wording (as in vii. 12), such a title as "king of kings," being offensive to Jewish ears, would be omitted. Deut. x. 17 lived on in the Jewish consciousness as a title for the Deity, as is shown by Dan. ii. 47, 1 Tim. vi. 15, Rev. xvii. 14, xix. 16.

Rawlinson remarks, the gradual building up of his empire, kingdom by kingdom. The mention of Jehovah here may be explained in several different ways. Perhaps the most natural and probable of these is that which postulates a decided influencing of Cyrus' mind by Jewish patriots. If Cyrus released the Jews at all, he certainly did not do it without urgency and petition on their part. To show that it fell in well with his policy, and that it was in accordance with his treatment of other nations, does not take the place of this necessary postulate of activity on the Jews' part. We may be sure that their leaders were not passive at such a time as this. On the contrary, it was just because their desire harmonized with his general policy that they were permitted to realize their hopes. Nor may we justly limit this influence to the political sphere. Cyrus was a man of his own time, in religion as well as in his other ideals. We know what effect the religious discourse of Ezra a century later had upon Artaxerxes (cf. viii. 22, vii. 23). Have we any reason to question a similar influence upon the mind of Cyrus? So far from it, we have contemporary evidence, but newly discovered, in the shape of the so-called "Cyrus-cylinder," bearing strong witness to the two essential points in this postulate: first, the religious convictions of the king; and second, his readiness to see in the chief Deity of his conquered subjects the same Divine power that had led him on to victory. In fact, the parallelism between this inscription and the edict under discussion becomes more striking the more closely its testimony is examined. For it was prepared at Babylon, under the supervision of the local idolators, and thus exhibits Cyrus to us as not unwilling to allow his deeds to be represented from the religious standpoint of those for whose use the composition was intended. So also in our decree, the same king is represented as ascribing his successes to the God of the people for whose benefit the decree was issued. According to this view, therefore, "Jehovah" is as much in place in this edict as the mention of Bel-Marduk in the cylinder.* In view of the clause which immediately follows, this explanation is to be preferred to that favored by Rawlinson, who says: "The use of the term 'Jehovah' instead of 'Ormuzd' was probably limited to the Hebrew transcript of the proclamation."

"And he hath charged me to build him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah." As soon as the postulate of previous Jewish influence upon Cyrus, just alluded to, is granted, this clause becomes perfectly reasonable and forms no ground for debate. Whatever a particular critic may think of the Jewish tradition on this subject as given in Josephus' *Antiquities*, book xi, chap. 1,

* Cf. Schrader, *Gen. Inscr.*, Vol. ii, pp. 60f.

§§ 1, 2, he is not justified in so binding together this specific form of the tradition and the very general position that the Jews exerted a certain degree of influence on the religious side of Cyrus' nature, as to make the two stand or fall together. Yet this is practically what has been done by critics who accept vi. 3-5 as trustworthy, but reject i. 2-4 as antecedently improbable. If this improbability has ever been pointed out, the writer at least has failed to find it. In fact, the great step from the extreme position of Koster's to the ground here advocated *has already been taken*, when vi. 3-5 and its context have been accepted as authentic and historical.* The expression "which is in Judah" (repeated in ver. 3) seems a clear indication of non-Jewish origin; to all but the Jew, the very location of the perished city was half-forgotten.

"His God be with him!" A natural phrase of well-wishing.

"Jehovah, the God of Israel." "Israel" is entirely in place here according to the rules laid down for its use during the exile-period, to which allusion has already been made.

"He is the God which is in Jerusalem." This sentence, long misinterpreted, with an odd prejudice against the natural order of the words, is plainly, when naturally understood, the product of one who stood upon the plane of "national religions." As Bel-Marduk is the God at Babylon, so Jehovah is "the God which is at Jerusalem." Even according to advanced religious criticism, Israel had long since passed this stage of their religious development.

"Let the men of his place help him with silver, etc. . . . beside the free-will offering." A comparison of vii, 15f. is sufficient to remove any possible objections to either the idea or the phraseology.

Where, then, it may be asked, are the positive grounds upon which this edict is rejected in so cavalier a fashion by critics from whom a more serious investigation would be expected? Meyer's whole contention against his opponents is that professed documents or fragments of documents are not to be brushed aside as not genuine on the ground of superficial objections. "A doubt is easily raised; and even if it is quite unfounded, or if the arguments brought forward in support of it are immediately answered, *semper aliquid hæret.*"† What shall be said then of a critique which not only has no solid arguments, but which even refuses to criticise? Until more positive reasons have been adduced why these

* Van Hoonacker, in the latest thing from his pen on this subject, *Expos. Times*, '97, pp. 351ff., has pointed this out very clearly.

† *Ent. d. Jud.*, p. 5.

three verses cannot be a part of the genuine edict, and until the strong arguments for their genuineness, both from antecedent probability and from their form and their agreement with vi. 3-5, have been answered, this decree of Cyrus on which the Jewish State was founded, and to which later tradition looked back as to a "Magna Charta," must continue to be regarded by conservative criticism as authentic and historical.

(2) Is the catalogue of the sacred vessels credible?

The answer to this question may be much more briefly expressed than the preceding. There are many critics who deny the trustworthiness of this list. But it cannot be too strongly emphasized that this judgment is only from *à priori* reasoning. There is absolutely nothing in the list itself to awaken suspicions of gratuitous invention by the author. Such suspicions, however, it is the fashion now to attach to every product of "the Chronicler's" pen for which there has not been preserved to us an independent witness. One would think that the discomfiture experienced by this class of writers, when such a happy confirmation of one of these unsupported passages as the Assyrian allusion to Manasseh's captivity was discovered in the buried records of the East,* would have sufficed to caution against this ultra-radical attitude toward "the Chronicler's" untested narratives. But no; we find Meyer also ready to say, with the rest, that our list is "an historically entirely worthless catalogue," without so much as stating the grounds for this assertion. To be sure, when he wants to justify the moderateness of the large figures and great wealth recorded in Ezra viii. 26f. and Neh. vii. 70-72, by a comparison with the huge sums of "the Chronicler," he turns to Chronicles, and not to Ezra i. 9-11, to find the examples for his comparison. But that makes no difference. Whether "the Chronicler" tells a story in large numbers or in small, he must be wrong, simply because he is "the Chronicler." In all seriousness, is this historical criticism? For even if *all* were proved that has been alleged against that writer from the days of Gramberg and De Wette to the present time, would that *in itself* justify a critic in rejecting without examination any material in his writings that is not independently established? Surely the only true course for a conservative criticism in such a case is to accept as true whatever is not either proved false, or does not of itself seem quite improbable.† And in the specific

* Cf. Schrader, *Cun. Inscr.*, Vol. ii, pp. 53-59. For a similar example of complete reversal of critical opinion—this time in Ezra, and by the same critic—see below in the discussion of Ezra iv. 2.

† All this, it is to be observed, is on the supposition that Ezra was written by the same author as Chronicles—which is by no means established beyond question.

case of the sacred vessels there is every reason to uphold its information as historical and valuable. In favor of this attitude toward it are to be urged the following considerations :

(i) The numbers are by no means excessive. These numbers vary somewhat in the three chief texts preserved to us. There are six separate items in the enumeration, of which four remain unchanged in all the texts, but the other two vary, either in the LXX., in First Esdras, or in both, from the Hebrew text. The writer is inclined to favor Bertheau-Ryssel's emendation and restoration of these figures, as doing most justice to the phenomena of the various readings. This conjecture favors the total as given in First Esdras, viz., 5469.

(ii) Whatever the total, but especially if this conjecture be correct, the irregularity of the figures themselves is opposed to the view that they are the product of imagination. This list is in no sense a list of "round numbers," though a few such occur.

(iii) The mention of "Mithredath, the treasurer,"* has always been a stumbling-block to those whose special effort it is to prove that the author of chap. i had no sources of information beyond those preserved to us. Some simply affirm that he invented this person for a private reason,† and gave to his invention the name Mithredath, as a very familiar Persian name, known to him proximately from iv. 7. Meyer conjectures that he may have gotten the name from v. 15 or vi. 3ff., whence he himself has cut it by his process of abbreviation. But apart from the fact that this is the purest conjecture, it gives away the whole contention. For if we are to believe that the author of chap. i derived this information from any sources except his own imagination, then he *had* material not preserved to us, and is to be so judged. If he got this name from one of those authentic documents, why may he not have gotten the list of the sacred vessels from the same or a similar source ?

(iv) And indeed the strong probability is not to be overlooked

* Largely on this ground, Schrader (*Stud. u. Krit.*, '67, pp. 480f.) decides that "the Chronicler" must have had a trustworthy source before him, from which he drew his material for chap. i. Strangely enough, he does not extend this opinion to cover vs. 2-4, though in his later work (*Cun. Inscr.*, Vol. ii, p. 60) he says that these verses "may be justified historically from the fact that they accord with" Cyrus' policy.

† Thus Kusters (*Het Herstel*, p. 34) says it was because the author wanted to make Sheshbazzar, who was really a Persian, appear still more certainly as a Jew, by giving him an intermediary between the throne and himself. One is tempted to ask, how much more was needed in this direction, after he had already termed him the "prince of Judah?" Did not "the Chronicler" expect to be believed? He certainly wrote, according to the view of most modern critics, as if he had a most credulous audience.

that so important a gift as that in vi. 5 would be carefully counted and recorded, and that the record would above all other records be likely to be preserved by the priests and guardians of the sanctuary. It was the inventory of their wealth. A critic may perhaps not unreasonably express doubt as to the accuracy of all the numbers exactly as recorded in i. 9-11; nothing else was so completely exposed to error and textual corruption as numerical signs. But to doubt the historical character of the list as a whole, any more than that, *e.g.*, of Neh. vii. 70-72, is to take a position unsupported either by antecedent probability or by an examination of the list itself.

Second.—Were the foundations of the temple laid under Cyrus?

The second main division of the Hebrew narrative-portion of Ezra i-vi is the account of events from the arrival of the returned exiles till the interruption of their work by the Samaritans, iii. 1-iv. 5. The outstanding events are three in number: First, an assembly of the people in the seventh month, for the erection of the altar and the resumption of the sacrificial ritual; second, the beginning of work on the temple in the second month of the next year, and the formal celebration of the laying of the foundation; and third, the interference of adversaries from the adjacent region resulting in an early suspension of the building operations. The essay by Schrader, in *Studien und Kritiken*, 1867, to which repeated reference has already been made, had as its object the complete discrediting of this whole narrative, and though portions of this critique have since been set aside as out of date, still in the main later writers have built upon Schrader, and have either repeated his arguments or assumed that they were final. But in the light of the latest critical contributions to the Ezra-literature, especially the treatises of Meyer and Van Hoonacker, it is beyond question that Schrader's arguments will have to be revised. No critic now can discredit Ezra iii. 1-iv. 5 without giving and defending *his own* reasons for so doing. And this result has been brought about in quite a different way by these two writers whose books appeared almost simultaneously. One of them, Van Hoonacker, consciously and avowedly defends the section in question; but the other, Meyer, takes ostensibly the same attitude toward it as toward the other work of "the Chronicler." He discredits it entirely; it is "without any historical value." This by express declaration. But by the logic of his other positions Meyer is forced to yield, now here, now there, that all the essential features of this narrative are historical.*

* In proof of this assertion, see Meyer, *Ent. d. Jud.*, pp. 44f., 73f., 80. Driver (*Introd.*, p. 517) adopts this modified view, and gives the attitude of the chief writers on the subject.

Schrader's arguments are as follows: First, only those passages which are plainly attributable to "the Chronicler" know anything of a beginning on the building of the temple in the second year of Cyrus; other sources for the history of the period in question put this beginning in the second year of Darius. And second, *all* the elements of "the Chronicler's" narrative, iii. 1-iv. 5, are due either to a borrowing from sources known to us, or to the free invention of his own fancy. These two assertions will be examined separately and in detail.

External testimony to the credibility of the second outstanding event in iii. 1-iv. 5, viz., the laying of the foundations.

Schrader appeals to three witnesses, Ezra v, Haggai and Zechariah.

(1) The testimony of Ezra v.

In the Aramaic narrative of Ezra v, we read at ver. 2: "Then rose up Zerubbabel, etc., . . . and began to build the house of God." And in the official report of Tattenai, at ver. 16, we read: "Then came the same Sheshbazzar and laid the foundations of the house of God which is in Jerusalem: and since that time even until now hath it been in building, and yet it is not completed." Schrader took up each of these assertions separately. He argued from the former that the lack of any word to indicate rebuilding, instead of simple building, showed the writer to have been of the opinion that it was the first beginning on the temple. And from the latter he argued that as the work was declared to have been continuous and uninterrupted, therefore the beginning referred to could not have been previous to the second year of Darius.

But it has been seen since then by all critics that these passages cannot be taken thus separately; they must be compared and their united voice heard. There are other problems that come in just here to complicate their testimony. Foremost among these is this: Are Zerubbabel and Sheshbazzar one and the same, or are they distinct individuals? If they were distinct, then, of course, the second of these passages must refer to a different occasion from that to which the first refers. This accounts then for the various attitudes toward this question which those writers assume who thus distinguish these characters. This is the point, therefore, at which it becomes necessary to discuss the whole problem of the identity of these Jewish leaders. Kusters, having already established to his own satisfaction that chap. v is composite and in neither component historical, assigns ver. 2 to one component source and ver. 16 to the other; he thus at once acknowledges a contradiction between them, and at the same time rids himself of all embarrassment therefrom: Zerubbabel and Sheshbazzar were

really distinct persons, but the writer of Ezra mistakenly identified them. Stade and Meyer also distinguish the two, and as a consequence are driven to the only rational interpretation of ver. 16, viz., that it cannot be taken in a strictly literal sense. For Meyer, the question of the identity of the two leaders is answered in the same way as Kosters answered it—in the negative. But he professes his utter inability to discover the basis for the view of Kosters and Wellhausen, that “the redactor of the Hebrew book of Ezra identifies the two.” Thus any embarrassment which ver. 2 might cause him is obviated, since he assigns this verse to the redactor. In opposition to all these views, Van Hoonacker defends the identity of the Jewish leaders, not simply according to an untrustworthy and late tradition (as does Kosters), but according to historical fact. In this opinion, which is also the traditional view, concurrence must be expressed, as being the only satisfactory solution of the difficulty. The grounds for this opinion may be stated briefly as follows :

√ (i) In the first place, as nearly all critics except Meyer agree, the author of Ezra identifies them. This is most strikingly shown in chap. i, in immediate connection with that phenomenon which is most generally granted as historically true though unconfirmed by other sources, viz., the mention of the Persian “treasurer” by name. If to the name Sheshbazzar there is added the title “prince of Judah,” then no room is left for doubting that, at least in the writer’s opinion, this person was the same with Zerubbabel, the one whose name heads the “list of those who first returned” immediately following (ii. 1f.)* Besides this place, there is also the testimony of chap. iii, compared with v. 16.

(ii) In the second place, the argument most strongly relied upon to prove that these were two princes, related but distinct, is shown by what has just been said to have no weight. For if the writer of Ezra identified them, and if he was the same with the author of 1 Chron. iii. 17f. (as all these critics hold), then what degree of probability can attach to Kosters’ remark: “That the same writer [the Chronicler] elsewhere (1 Chron. iii. 18) inserts a *Sheshbazzar* in the list of Zerubbabel’s family, is probably connected with the effort to make Sheshbazzar an Israelite?” The author would thereby simply stultify himself; for if he made up or made over the list in Chronicles, it is inconceivable that he should not have identified Zerubbabel and Sheshbazzar there also. But it

* Meyer’s suggestion, that Sheshbazzar preceded the caravan, in order to prepare for its arrival (of which he complacently says: “This is also the most natural”), is quite justly ridiculed by Kosters. Just what could Sheshbazzar do to prepare for the arrival, that would not require the presence of those for whom the preparations were made?

may be objected: if Kusters' position is untenable, still Meyer's view is not illogical, for while he connects the Sheshbazzar of Ezra with the Shenazzar of Chronicles, in both places he makes this personage the *uncle* of Zerubbabel. The objection to this is twofold: First, that, as has been seen, Meyer is wrong in holding that the author of Ezra does not identify them; and second, that, while it seems a plausible combination to connect שְׁנַאזָר with שִׁשְׁבַזָר, yet this is by no means proved, but is only a more or less probable hypothesis. But, granting that this combination is to be accepted, no argument can be founded on this passage in Chronicles, for the reason that beyond all question the present state of the text is very corrupt. Van Hoonacker proposes that we should read after the words "Malchiram, and Pedaiah, and Shenazzar" [properly *sons* of Shealtiel, not brothers], "Zerubbabel his name" (but slightly amended from the disconnected words זֶרֶבְבַל וְשִׁמְעִי in the next verse). There are many things to commend this emendation; it simplifies all the difficulties of the passage, and it most easily explains the origin of the present corruptions. However, it is at best a conjecture, and therefore is not to be argued from. But it serves this very useful purpose, to emphasize the fact that no conclusions as to the phenomena of Ezra can be drawn from this passage as we now have it. While this second argument may not, then, be relied upon to prove the present contention, it at least serves to withdraw the only support from the rival theory that Sheshbazzar was a *Davidic prince* distinct from Zerubbabel. For with this external evidence lacking, there is absolutely nothing to favor the theory; antecedent probability would then favor rather the earlier view of Stade, Kuenen and Kusters, that Sheshbazzar was a foreigner.

(iii) The last argument in favor of "the Chronicler's" correctness in identifying these leaders is that drawn from the names themselves. Zerubbabel is probably a combination of the Hebrew words זָרֹעַ (Qal pass. part. fr. זָרַע) and בָּבֶל, the "begotten of Babylon" (*i.e.*, at Babylon), in which "the curious elision of the aspirate we can best account for by referring to the Babylonian mode of pronunciation in which the elision or suppression of the *ע* occurred."* Sheshbazzar is probably a contraction from Shamash-bal-uzur, or from Sin-bal-uzur, "Shamash (or, Sin) protect the son!"† Now the fact that of these two unusual names, one of them without a parallel in Hebrew records, the other par-

* Schrader, *Cun. Inscr.*, Vol. ii. p. 66.

† Van Hoonacker prefers the former; Meyer, the latter. Meyer defends his connection of שִׁשְׁבַזָר with שִׁנַּי, against the criticism of Löhr (in *Theol. Rundschau*, Feb., '98, p. 186), in a special contribution on the subject (in the same publication, pp. 339ff., No. 3, *Shesh. u. Shen.*)

alleled but once; and the further fact that this single parallel—Beltshazzar—is borne by one who had also a Hebrew name, viz., Daniel—these facts make the hypothesis not only natural but extremely probable that Zerubbabel and Sheshbazzar are only two names for a single person. And this conclusion is further confirmed when it is observed, first, that this person is uniformly called Sheshbazzar when he is spoken of in his official relation to the foreign court, but elsewhere, in his Jewish connections, is called Zerubbabel; and second, that, as the grandson of King Jehoiachin, he was certainly brought up at the court of Babylon (cf. 2 Kings xxv. 27-30), and such a name as “Born-at-Babylon” would be meaningless in such a circle. From the Jewish standpoint it was a noteworthy fact that this future head of the Davidic family was born at Babylon, and this name was very naturally given the child. But from the Babylonian standpoint the name was absurd: were not all his companions “Zerubbabels” *in fact*, as much as he? Hence the inherent probability that Zerubbabel had also a Babylonian name, and the superficiality, in this particular case, of such a remark as that with which Meyer disposes of the identification-theory: “The identification of two persons of different name is always a resource of despair.”*

Returning then to v. 2 and 16, what is the *united* testimony of these two verses as to the beginning of work on the temple? The answer is now simple and direct. Sheshbazzar, who is the same as Zerubbabel, “laid the foundations” of the temple under command of Cyrus, and, some seventeen years later, “began to build the house of God.” The significance of this testimony is very great; its importance cannot be overrated in the solution of the question, How are Ezra iii and the prophet Haggai to be harmonized? For, be it observed, the interpretation which Schrader puts upon ver. 16 is quite untenable, and has never found adherents. The context and the language of the verse itself allow us here but one interpretation of the word “then,” with which the verse begins. It was immediately upon the command of Cyrus that Sheshbazzar “came;” and the intimate collocation of the words “came” and “laid” (with *asyndeton*), to which Schrader himself calls attention, proves conclusively that the sequence of action throughout was close and immediate.

What then, it may be asked, is to be said of the assertion that the building had been a continuous process since that first beginning? But does the verse say this? Or does it say something else very much like this, which is nevertheless not open to the same objection? The Aramaic text says simply: וּמִן־אֲרָדָן

* *Ent. d. Jud.*, p. 75.

ויער־כען כהבנא ולא שלים. The Hithpe'el participle of בנא is the cardinal point in dispute. It certainly means, "it is (or. was) being builded," or, in better English, "it has been in building." Must this word, however, be pressed here to its strictest meaning so as to justify the interpretation that building operations were going on "from then until now?" Or may it not be used here in a looser manner, precisely as in English we use the phrase "in building," to signify that the building, once begun, was in a state or condition of being builded "from then until now?" When we say, for example, that York Minster was several hundred years in building, do we mean that work upon it was continuous from the laying of the first stone to the completion of the last architectural feature? Or, if objection be made to this illustration, on the ground that *we* now naturally view such a process as a unit after its completion, it may be replied that the same expression may equally well be used of an interrupted operation in the midst of which we ourselves stand. When Cologne Cathedral was at length finished in recent years after centuries of waiting, it would be perfectly natural during the period of resumed activity to have remarked concerning it that it had been in building for centuries and was not yet completed. Nor may it be objected that this is only English usage. For it is not primarily a question of language, but of a particular way of conceiving of an operation. And it cannot be established that בנא is any more strict in its meaning than its English equivalent.

So much for the proof that the sentence *may* mean nothing more than a lengthy but suspended process. But beyond this, it is clearly indicated that the sentence *must* be limited to this interpretation. For the very fact that the "laying of the foundations" is expressly mentioned, and thus distinguished from the rest of the work, proves that there was a *distinguishing somewhat*, marking off the one operation from the other. And what could this have been, save *the period of suspended operation?* Thus we find that, so far from contradicting the information given us in chap. iii and v. 2, this verse furnishes us with the only intimation in the Book of Ezra, from any pen besides that of "the Chronicler," that the building of the temple *was* an interrupted work with two distinct stages.*

Finally, the alleged contradiction between this verse and ver. 2 is entirely obviated by a proper understanding of the *situation*

* The solutions proposed by others do not appear satisfactory. One is that Tattenai misunderstood what the Jews told him. Another, that of Meyer (p. 44), is that the Jews deliberately deceived Tattenai, in order to make the legitimacy of their undertaking appear more firmly rooted in Cyrus' patronage.

presupposed in each. And by a due consideration of the peculiar conformation of the ground, the topography of the temple-area, it is possible to read into the words a narrative of events which commends every statement as natural in the circumstances presupposed. It is submitted that this phase of the subject has been left too much in the background by critical writers, and the whole matter has been made a quarrel about words. In view of the local conditions imposed upon all building operations, the following statement will, it is believed, furnish not only a natural representation of the course which *this* building of the temple must have followed, but also a reasonable explanation of the language used by the various Biblical writers, and just to that extent a vindication of them. In the second month of the second year (about May, 537 B.C.) the preliminary labor was begun, looking toward the restoration of the ruined sanctuary. This consisted doubtless in the clearing away of the rubbish upon the site of the temple proper, and the leveling of this circumscribed portion of the temple-area to receive the structure itself. Then, certainly as soon as it was possible to do so, the cornerstone of the foundation* on which the temple itself was to be reared was laid amidst great celebrations, in which both sorrow and joy were evinced by the people at sight of this, the first promise that the new house of God was to be built. In addition to this foundation of the temple-structure, there remained the work of clearing away the *débris* that must have covered the whole of the sacred area, and the repairing of those injuries to the great substructures which inevitably resulted from the violent overthrow of city and temple by Nebuchadnezzar. There was thus a great amount of work to be done, and it must have continued but a short time, until the influences brought to bear from without by the Samaritan opposition put a stop to the whole work, and left all in the confusion of a great stone-quarry. Not until Darius' reign did circumstances favor the resumption of work on this once-cherished project. Even then the people said: "The time to build the house of the Lord is not yet come" (Hag. i. 2). But, stirred by Haggai and Zechariah, the leaders, spiritual and temporal, put hand to the work and made a fresh start. Again there was a preliminary stage devoted to clearing away the rubbish. More than a third as long a period had elapsed since the first attempt as had separated that from the temple's destruction. Hence there need be no surprise that just such another beginning had to be made in 520 as in 537. Moreover, it is quite possible that actual violence had been visited by the

* This is what Schick terms the *Unterbau*; it is said to have been 6 ells in height. (Cf. *Die Stiftshütte*, etc., p. 104, pp. 100ff.)

enemies of the Jews upon their undertaking. This may not indeed be comparable to the Babylonian destruction in the extent of damage done to the great substructure, yet certainly in the harm done to the temple itself it would not yield to the earlier misfortune. Meyer acknowledges this: "That even if the cornerstone had been laid in 538 and the building then had come to a standstill, the Jews should begin again, eighteen years later, in the year 520, with the laying of the cornerstone, is surely perfectly natural; we at the present day would not do otherwise."* In the end, after four years of apparently uninterrupted labor, the new temple was finished and dedicated amidst general rejoicing.

This representation of the course of events obviously fits the data of v. 2 and 16. Zerubbabel and Jeshua really *began* to build the house in 520, for it had never risen above its foundation; it would have been positively wrong to insert any of the words which Schrader suggests as necessary to the completion of the idea. And at the same time, the evidences of repairs on the temple-area, manifestly made years before, were sufficient to persuade Tattenai in 519(?) that the work as a whole dated from Cyrus' time, and that the temple had "been in building since that time." Will it prove that the data in the other witnesses find an equally natural explanation by this means?

(2) The testimony of Haggai.

In Haggai, Schrader appeals to the following passages: For a negative support to his theory, i. 2, 4, 8, 14, and for a positive argument, ii. 15-19. The former may be dismissed at once. They simply show that the temple was yet to be built when Haggai delivered his first prophecy, in the sixth month of 520. The last is the passage which has received by far the most attention. It is in itself a difficult passage, but, in addition to this, there is a peculiar wording at just the critical point for our discussion. Van Hoonacker† and Koster‡ are the protagonists for the rival interpretations of these verses. The latter maintains that we are expressly told by the prophet that the foundation of the temple was laid on the very day when Haggai was delivering his discourse, the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month, while the former critic denies the possibility of this interpretation. The question centres in the signification of the particle לַמָּחָר, ver. 18. Van Hoonacker asserts that in this compound temporal conjunction, each part should be given its own proper force, in such man-

* See also Eerdmans, in *Theol. Tijds.*, '95, pp. 182ff.: "The double laying of foundations is least of all a difficulty."

† Cf. *Zorobabel et le Second Temple*, pp. 78ff.; also *Nouv. Études*, pp. 105ff.

‡ Cf. *Het Herstel*, pp. 5-9.

ner that the thought of the hearer is first directed to the point of time *from* which it is then to take its departure. The sense of the clause so introduced he renders into Latin thus: "*usque inde a die templi fundati.*" Kusters contests the truth of this assertion and claims, on the other hand, that if the prophet had intended to produce this effect upon the mind of his hearers, he would have used a simpler and commoner way of expressing his thought. But apart from the particular force of this particle, the two critics are at variance also as to the time intended. Even if Van Hoonacker's contention in the former respect were defensible, this would still, Kusters thinks, prove nothing in favor of the day mentioned in Ezra iii—for to that occasion the former critic refers the thought of the prophet as the *terminus a quo*.

In this debate it is difficult to feel any very deep concern; and this for the reason that there seems to be nothing at stake, from an historical standpoint. As a question of exegetical difficulty it is a matter of interest. The interpretation of לָמָן advocated so spiritedly by Van Hoonacker does in fact seem preferable to the contrary view, which makes *no* distinction between the use of this particle and of the simple מָן. Yet even so, we are not directed by the prophet's discourse to any day in the distant past. Kusters is in the main right in holding that even if לָמָן has the force which his opponent assigns to it, still the day referred to is in the recent past. Disagreement must be expressed only on the date to be adopted. It is the twenty-first of the seventh month (or possibly a few days earlier), the date of Haggai's *second* discourse, rather than the twenty-fourth of the sixth month, to which the foundation-laying of the temple is to be assigned. But here there is no real difficulty from any contradiction with Ezra iii. The foundation of the temple was actually laid on the day to which Haggai refers. For the prophet, *that* was the only foundation-laying with which he was concerned. And for the people, there was no danger of confounding this with the similar event seventeen years before, which had proved a fiasco. The less said of that event the better; for from the moment that the people actually began the work, Haggai's mission was a mission of cheer and comfort.

(3) The testimony of Zechariah (i-viii).

Of the four passages in Zechariah, viz., i. 16, iv. 9, vi. 12f., viii. 9, to which Schrader appealed, all are abandoned by Kusters except the last. "If pressed (*desnoods*), these texts admit of the interpretation that the foundation of the temple had been laid a number of years before."* He confines himself to the last. On the contrary, Wellhausen abandons all except iv. 9. The unsatis-

* *Het Herstel*, pp. 9-14.

factory character of these passages as proofs that Ezra iii is unhistorical is thus exposed by the very diversity of judgment passed on them by the friends of the argument. And in fact, an examination of each of them yields at most nothing more than testimony to the fact that the cornerstone of the temple was laid in the second year of Darius, a fact not only readily granted, but even an essential part of "the Chronicler's" version of the history. Whether Van Hoonacker is right or wrong in his interpretation of viii. 9 is not for the present discussion an essential question. In the writer's opinion, he is not correct in his reference of כּוֹס to the second year of Cyrus; the ministries of Haggai and Zechariah were distinctly in the time of Darius, two decades later. At the same time, it is impossible to agree with Schrader and others in their denial of any real significance to להבנות, "that it might be built," in the same verse. It seems to be an implicit allusion to the fiasco of Cyrus' reign.* But be this as it may, the true solution of these questions is to be found, not by a search for doubtful allusions in the text of the prophets, but by the consideration of the topographical conditions, combined with the careful wording of all the historical narratives. Such a course, confirmed by its harmony with *all* the data, serves to vindicate the historical character of the chief event in Ezra iii, the undertaking of the temple-building in Cyrus' reign.

Internal testimony to the credibility of iii. 1-iv. 5.

The second assertion which Schrader defends in his treatise is that *all* the elements of the narrative in iii. 1-iv. 5 are due either to a borrowing from sources still known to us, or else to the free invention of the writer's fancy. Schrader devotes sixteen pages to the analysis of this passage and the assignment of its various statements to their true sources, as he conceives the author to have operated. But in a later work, Schrader has saved his opponents the trouble of disproving his earlier argument. In his *Cuneiform Inscriptions and the Old Testament*,† he discusses the mention of Esarhaddon as a colonizer of Samaria in iv. 2, and reaches the conclusion that this statement is not a mistake, as he had previously supposed, but is independently verified by a cylinder of that Assyrian monarch. In a footnote he explicitly says; "I need scarcely say that, in accordance with the above documentary data, I abandon the doubts I formerly raised, in *Studien und Kritiken*, respecting a second colonization of Samaria distinct from the former one

* The parallel instances of meaningless infinitives cited by Schrader do not seem to be true parallels. (So also judge Hitzig, Wright, Bredenkamp, cited by Köhler).

† Vol. ii, pp. 61ff.

carried out under Sargon-Salmanassar." Here is a manly retraction of opinion which leaves nothing to be desired in the direction of a vindication of the author of Ezra iv. 2. One can only wish that he had stated also his opinion of the bearing of this admission upon the general credibility of the whole section now under discussion. But even without Schrader's opinion, each critic is at liberty to draw from it his own conclusions. The *point* of the assertion is already broken that *all* the elements of the narrative (not derived from preserved sources) are unhistorical. And if one such element—and that, be it remembered, the *only* one to which the test of ancient monuments has been applied—has proved to be historical, this circumstance is certainly of very great weight in the estimate of the general value of this writer's untested information. It proves that he had sources of information unknown to us, whatever those sources may have been. And if the radical critic, once anxious to show the absolute similarity and close connection of iv. 1-5 with chap. iii, *now* insists that the former shall be separated from the latter, so that the confirmatory force of the mention of Esar-haddon shall not be extended over more than its immediate context, then let it be so. Let chap. iii stand on its own merits. But even so, the narrative there related bears every mark of historicity.

This has already been seen to be true in respect to the great outstanding fact of the chapter, the foundation-laying. It is no less true with regard to the less prominent events. Of these, the one which occupies the greatest amount of space is the erection of an altar and the formal resumption of the sacrificial ritual as described in iii. 2-6. Meyer, in spite of his categorical denial of the historical value of the chapter, is yet compelled to say: * "The fact that the altar was erected immediately after the return is not . . . to be doubted, even though there were no tradition on the subject;" and again, "An altar can never have been lacking on the site of the temple from the time that Jerusalem was again inhabited." And what is true of Meyer is true also of nearly all critics. The fact is in itself so inherently probable that to doubt it is an absurdity. Moreover, in addition to this general probability, the fact is completely established by another Biblical witness. The language of Haggai in ii. 11ff. proves that the ritual was in operation long before the temple was completed; and in ver. 14 of the same chapter direct reference is made to the altar, the erection of which is described in Ezra iii. Haggai says: "And that which they offer *there* is unclean." Here we have then another confirmation of the historicity of our chapter which

* *Ent. d. Jud.*, pp. 73, 45.

Schrader overlooked, but which later critics have had to acknowledge.*

Again, in ver. 7, the fact that the same methods of obtaining materials and skilled workmen are ascribed to the builders of the second temple as are elsewhere ascribed to the builders of the first temple, has been used as an argument against the credibility of this chapter. Some critic has well remarked that it seems far more probable that a postexilic writer should have had trustworthy information on the manner of erection of Zerubbabel's temple, which was standing when he wrote, than on that of Solomon, erected 500 years earlier; and that if the writer erroneously imputed the methods used in one undertaking to the other, we can more easily suppose that these methods were projected from the nearer into the more remote past than *vice versa*. But apart from this, we have no reason to doubt the historicity of either account. What was the best (and perhaps the necessary) course for one builder to pursue was equally the best course for the other. And the very fact that Solomon's temple *had* been built by these methods, made it more likely that those who sought only to replace his structure as nearly as possible should adopt the same methods. If the *historian* of the second building can be held by critics to have followed the historian of the first building, how much more would the later *builders* themselves have copied the earlier builders!

Moreover, there is external support in other Biblical narratives for this account also. In vi. 4, in the edict of Cyrus "concerning the house of God," we read special directions regarding stones and timber, the expense of which was to be defrayed "out of the king's house." Accordingly, in iii. 7, "masons" and "carpenters" are mentioned, answering to the two materials of construction named in the edict. And the "meat and drink and oil" were undoubtedly those natural products of the land which would have been collected from the Jews as a part of their imperial

* Kosters attempts to show that iii. 3-6 cannot be a unit, because ver. 4 "breaks the connection" and introduces a "hopeless confusion" regarding the day when regular offerings were resumed. As to the latter charge—the "hopeless confusion" is only the product of a singularly narrow and illiberal interpretation of the language used; Van Hoonacker has shown (*Nouv. Études*, pp. 146f.) that these verses admit of a most natural exegesis, and that ver. 5 requires the presence of ver. 4, which therefore cannot be an interpolation. And as to the "breaking the connection"—the object which Kosters had in making this indefensible assertion (*viz.* to get rid of the mention of the feast of tabernacles, which occurs in the *seventh month*) would not be attained even if ver. 4 could be shown to be an interpolation; for ver. 6, whose presence in the text is required in order to argue ver. 4 out of it, does itself mention the "seventh month," precisely as ver. 1, and thus justifies the author for adopting ver. 1 from Neh. viii. 1.

taxes (probably = *בלו* in the technical phrase *כנרה בלו והלך*), but which were graciously remitted by Cyrus as his contribution toward the erection of the temple of Jehovah.* Thus iii. 7 simply presents to us a picture of Cyrus' decree in practical operation. And that the Jewish community at this period had to go outside its own borders for suitable timber for large constructions is probably shown by Neh. ii. 8. So also at the time of the fall of Jerusalem, we read of timber brought to the temple from the Lebanon, out of which Johannes "the zealot" constructed "towers" for military purposes.†

Thus whatever statement of this section we examine, we find it tallying with that view of the situation which antecedent probability and other sources of information require us to accept. Every element in the narrative that from its nature is capable of verification is abundantly and sometimes surprisingly verified by the results of candid criticism and comparison. And such minor details as cannot be treated thus are nevertheless fully vindicated by the general character of credibility which the whole narrative has received by the successful tests. There is in fact no middle ground between the extreme of historical skepticism presented to us in Koster's work and the practical acknowledgment that even "the Chronicler's" contributions to Ezra are historical and trustworthy.

II. Historicity of the narrative-sections of the second half of Ezra.

The sections included under this head are vii. 1-10 and the whole of chap. x. As has already been seen, there is good reason to believe that portions of these sections, viz., vii. 6c-9 and x. 1-19 are substantially the same as Ezra wrote them in his "memoirs," but recast from the autobiographical into the historical form. If this were proved, then there would be no need to vindicate the historicity of the narrative therein contained. But a conjecture such as this can never be accepted in lieu of proof; it therefore becomes necessary to examine here, lastly, the historicity of these sections as a whole, at least in so far as they have been challenged in this respect.

Chap. vii. 1-10 opens with a genealogy of Ezra, the character whose career is to occupy the reader's attention in the remaining

* See Meyer, *Ent. d. Jud.*, pp. 24, 53, 68.

† See further Schick (*Die Stiftshütte*, etc., p. 222), who by a residence of over fifty years in Palestine certainly knows whereof he speaks: "Since in the neighborhood of Jerusalem from the beginning and at all times and to the present day there have been but few high trees, the cedars [viz., those used in the time of Justinian] must have been brought from the Lebanon, as Solomon did for the first temple."

chapters of the book. This genealogy is very generally discredited by critics on two grounds: first, because Ezra is called the "son of Seraiah," who was the chief-priest put to death by Nebuchadnezzar at Riblah in 586, a century and a quarter before Ezra appears on the scene; and second, because the list of the high-priests of ancient Israel here given as Ezra's ancestors is a worthless catalogue of unhistorical personages. How the former argument can be seriously put forward by a candid critic is a mystery. In view of the universal Semitic mode of thought in genealogical matters, in view of the constantly recurring usage of בן as the equivalent of "grandson" or "descendant" throughout the whole Old Testament, and in view of the natural explanation ready at hand for the omission, in the present case, of the intermediate links between Ezra and Seraiah, viz., that the latter was the most recent *high*-priestly ancestor of the former—in view of these considerations, there appears to be no force whatever in this objection. To suppose that the same writer who informs us that Eliashib, the high-priest in Ezra's time, was the grandson of Jeshua, and that this Jeshua was in turn the grandson of Seraiah, should at the same time let those four generations be paralleled in Ezra's genealogy by a single leap, requires a far greater degree of credulity than the simple alternative supposition. And as to the latter argument, it need only be remarked that it leads out into a larger field of discussion than the limits of the present task will permit us to enter. Suffice it to say that the position taken by this class of critics is one dictated by a peculiar, novel and unproved representation of the whole history of ancient Israel, and that it involves a conception of the Biblical writers' purposes and methods quite inconsistent with the moral law which they themselves constantly magnify.

The information given in vers. 6c-9 may be thus summarized: Ezra led a caravan of his fellow-exiles from Babylonia to Palestine in the seventh year of Artaxerxes, and he had the approval of the king in this undertaking. The facts of Ezra's return and of the royal favor are guaranteed as historical by the succeeding document and memoirs. The only statement that has been questioned is the chronological notice. *First*, Kusters has denied the correctness of the "seventh year." But in this he has not been followed by other critics.* If, as has been seen, iv. 12 refers to the band that Ezra led back as having already arrived in Jerusalem when those

* Kusters attempts an explanation of why the redactor "chose" the seventh year. As Nehemiah's second visit to Jerusalem came thirteen years *after* his first visit, so Ezra must have come thirteen years *before* that first visit of Nehemiah. Is this submitted seriously, or in jest?

events took place, then the date of Ezra's return *cannot* have been far from 458, either one way or the other. Add to this the consideration that Ezra, who gives so particularly all the chronological notices of his trip (cf. viii. 15, 31, 32, 33), must certainly have given above all else the date of his departure from Babylon, and there is left no ground whatever for suspicion that vii. 7f. is untrustworthy. The very fact that it is given twice over is no small indication of the writer's certainty as to the true date. But, *second*, those who accept the year as correctly given have nevertheless expressed doubt as to the accuracy of the day mentioned in ver. 9. "Upon the first day of the first month," we read, "הוא יסר המעלה" from Babylon, and on the first day of the fifth month came he to Jerusalem." The words left untranslated are preferably to be pointed so as to read with the LXX.: *αὐτὸς ἐθεμελίωσε τὴν ἀνάβασιν*, "he founded (*i.e.*, made the initial move toward) the ascent." This statement, some have asserted,* stands in direct contradiction to viii. 13, where we read: "Then we departed from the river of Ahava on the twelfth day of the first month." But there are the best of reasons for believing that the author of vii. 9 was precisely right in giving as the date the *first* day of the first month. For the peculiar form of expression used by him seems to indicate plainly that he had in mind a *preliminary* start, which was worthy of mention, yet was not the final departure of the caravan. This first move of importance consisted in Ezra's departure from Babylon, the capital, with such of the Jews as lived there; it was certainly worthy of mention, and must have been specified in Ezra's recollections. Again, the actual departure of the caravan had to be from some general rendezvous to which the Jews of all Babylonia might repair. Such a place the city of Babylon was not, but the "river of Ahava" was. Finally, if Rawlinson be correct in his identification of this locality with the "Avva" or "Ivva" of 2 Kings xvii. 24, xix. 13 (called by the Greeks "Is"), then there is furnished a striking confirmation of the accuracy of the date in question. For we are informed by Herodotus that this place was reckoned as eight days' journey from Babylon. Add to this figure the three days' encampment mentioned in viii. 15 and we are brought exactly to the twelfth day, the date given by Ezra for the departure from Ahava. But in any case there is no contradiction between vii. 9 and viii. 31, for they certainly speak of two *different* points of departure. Besides, the first day of a new year is in itself a probable date for the first movement toward the realization of that great object for which Ezra had long been striving. The average advanced critic

*So Meyer, *Ent. d. Jud.*, p. 92, note 1.

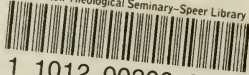
would be the last to deny that Ezra was a strict observer of times and seasons.

Chap. x is not challenged as to its historicity by any critic of eminence. All recognize in it a more or less complete revision of material contained in Ezra's personal narrative. There are a number of critical questions of considerable importance which this chapter raises, but they are all concerned with the exegesis of certain obscure passages, or with the deductions to be drawn from facts already granted to be historical.

The task of examining the Book of Ezra as to the historicity of its several parts has now been completed. The one great outstanding corollary of the conclusions reached is the inestimable value of the book as an historical source. This thought forces itself more and more impressively upon the mind of the student of that period. Outside of the few and often obscure allusions to contemporaneous events which we find scattered here and there in the prophecies of Haggai and Zechariah, these ten chapters of Ezra contain the only information that we possess regarding the course of Israel's history for nearly a hundred years, from the middle of the sixth to the middle of the fifth century. And that this was a most critical period in the national and religious life of the Jews will hardly be denied by even the most skeptical of historical critics. The very fact that *the* great event which marked the opening of the period could be negated with even a show of plausibility is a revelation of the importance of our book. Since Meyer's epoch-making work appeared, however, a firm basis has been established, on which future conservative scholarship may build. And the prediction is ventured that the one remaining step which Meyer refused to take, and yet really took—the vindication of the author of the present Book of Ezra—will soon be generally seen to be the only logical course for those who are prepared to follow Meyer in all his consciously defended positions. In the meantime, the days for critical eccentricities in handling the history of the postexilic period are passed. With the sixth century we stand on firm historical ground. Until Meyer's *Entstehung des Judenthums* has been thoroughly answered, there is no room for new theories of the origin of Judaism; and Wellhausen's failure to answer it and the inherent strength of Meyer's position unite to assure us that there is no danger that this will ever be accomplished.

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